

Chapter 7: Learning

OB in focus

The Learning Age: a renaissance for a New Britain

Learning is the key to prosperity – for each of us as individuals, as well as for the nation as a whole. Investment in human capital will be the foundation of success in the knowledge-based global economy of the twenty-first century. This is why the Government has put learning at the heart of its ambition. This Green Paper sets out for consultation how learning throughout life will build human capital by encouraging the acquisition of knowledge and skills and emphasising creativity and imagination. The fostering of an enquiring mind and the love of learning are essential to our future success.

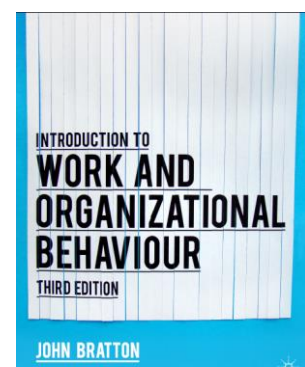
To achieve stable and sustainable growth, we will need a well-educated, well-equipped and adaptable labour force. To cope with rapid change and the challenge of the information and communication age, we must ensure that people can return to learning throughout their lives. We cannot rely on a small elite, no matter how highly educated or highly paid. Instead, we need the creativity, enterprise and scholarship of all our people. As well as securing our economic future, learning has a wider contribution. It helps make ours a civilized society, develops the spiritual side of our lives and promotes active citizenship. Learning enables people to play a full part in their community. It strengthens the family, the neighbourhood and consequently the nation.

To realize our ambition, we must all develop and sustain a regard for learning at whatever age. For many people this will mean overcoming past experiences which have put them off learning. For others it will mean taking the opportunity, perhaps for the first time, to recognize their own talent, to discover new ways of learning and to see new opportunities opening up.

That is why this Green Paper encourages adults to enter and re-enter learning at every point in their lives, whatever their experience at school. There are many ways in which we can all take advantage of new opportunities: [1] as parents we can play our part in encouraging, supporting and raising the expectations of our children by learning alongside them; [2] as members of the work force we can take on the challenge of learning in and out of work; and [3] as citizens we can balance the rights we can expect from the state, with the responsibilities of individuals for their own future, sharing the gains and the investment needed.

The Learning Age will be built on a renewed commitment to self-improvement and on a recognition of the enormous contribution learning makes to our society. As President John F Kennedy once put it, 'Liberty without learning is always in peril and learning without liberty is always in vain.'

David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education and Employment



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